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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

In-depth evaluation of the programme on environment

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services entitled "In-depth evaluation of the programme on environment" dated 8 March 1995. The Secretary-General is in agreement with the recommendations it contains.

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ANNEX

[8 March 1995]

In-depth evaluation of the programme on environment

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

SUMMARY

The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its thirty-fourth session, recommended that an in-depth evaluation of the programme on environment be prepared for its consideration in 1995.

The report presents findings and recommendations on the catalytic and coordinating role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (chap. II); on activities that UNEP is carrying out to reach its overall objectives (chap. III); and on the administration of the Programme (chap. IV).

The general thrust of the recommendations is to refocus UNEP activities by strengthening its partnership with other organizations within and outside of the United Nations system, with due regard to its role as a global environment programme.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), at its thirty-fourth session, recommended that an in-depth evaluation of the programme on environment be prepared for its consideration in 1995. 1/

2. Since 1972, in conformity with its catalytic and coordinating role, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has developed programmes that cover nearly all sectors of the United Nations system. It was not possible in the context of the present report to provide an overview of all these programmes, a number of which are quite successful, such as the industry and the environment programme and the oceans and coastal areas programme. The analysis has been organized around the three overall objectives of the programme on environment in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997: (a) environment assessment (evaluation and review, monitoring and information exchange); (b) environmental management (goal setting and planning, international consultation and agreements); and (c) supporting measures (capacity-building, environmental awareness and training). 2/ The overall objectives are in line with those of the Action Plan adopted at Stockholm in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. This approach provides a focus on issues which are relevant to all programmes of UNEP, even if they are not described or dealt with in detail.

3. The evaluation team reviewed the whole range of UNEP activities. The present report contains an overview of the UNEP organizational context, but, because of limitations of space, provides analyses of issues only where problems needed to be characterized and recommendations made.

4. The following categories of information were reviewed in the conduct of the in-depth evaluation: (a) information in the public domain (United Nations reports and documents and studies by academics and non-governmental organizations); (b) information from internal sources (UNEP internal evaluation reports, internal audit reports, reports of consultants and UNEP internal working documents); (c) the views of Governments, as contained in the statements of government representatives at the seventeenth session of the UNEP Governing Council; (d) submissions by programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); and (e) structured interviews and consultations with intergovernmental and non-governmental organization representatives and staff of UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations specialized agencies, convention secretariats and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

II. FOCUSING THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

A. Main mandates

5. Following the outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the General Assembly, by its resolution 2997 (XXVIII) of 15 December 1972, established a Governing Council of UNEP with a small secretariat to serve as focal point for environmental action and coordination within the United Nations system, and a voluntary Environment Fund to provide for additional financing for environment programmes.

6. In the same resolution, the General Assembly decided that the Governing Council of UNEP should, inter alia, (a) promote international cooperation in the field of the environment and recommend, as appropriate policies to that end; (b) provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system; (c) keep under review the world environmental situation in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by Governments; and (d) maintain under continuing review the impact of national and international environmental policies and measures on developing countries.

7. By its resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations on international institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) as contained in chapter 38 of Agenda 21, particularly those on the establishment of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. Regarding the role of UNEP, Agenda 21 states that in the follow-up to the Conference, there will be a need for an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its Governing Council and recommends that UNEP concentrate on a number of priority areas. 3/

8. UNEP manages financial resources which originate from four main sources: the United Nations regular budget, the Environment Fund, trust funds and counterpart contributions. The last three sources are voluntary; the last two, trust funds and counterpart contributions, are earmarked contributions. The total amount of resources during the biennium 1992-1993 amounted to $214 million (see para. 74, table 1, below), showing a continued slightly growing trend over the years owing to increments in trust fund and counterpart contributions. The percentage allocation between the different sources during the period 1984-1985 was as follows: 11 per cent under the regular budget, 74 per cent under the Environment Fund, 12 per cent under trust funds and 3 per cent under counterpart contributions. The percentage allocation during the period 1992-1993 was 6 per cent, 61 per cent, 25 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

9. In its resolution 44/229 of 22 December 1989, the General Assembly endorsed the target of $100 million for contributions to the Environment Fund by the year 1992. In its decision 16/44 of 31 May 1991, the Governing Council reconfirmed this annual target. In its decision 17/32 of 21 May 1993 on the Environment Fund, the Governing Council noted with concern that contributions in 1992 and pledges for 1993 had not only fallen short of the annual target established by the Council but that they would be insufficient to finance the Fund programme activities approved by the Council at its sixteenth session. The Committee of

Permanent Representatives stated in 1993 that, judging from recent experience, it seemed clear that for the time being there would be no significant increase in resources available to UNEP and that ... it was therefore necessary that the Governing Council give guidance to the Executive Director in allocating scarce resources across the identified priority areas. 4/

B. Catalytic and coordinating role of the United Nations Environment Programme

10. In the UNEP corporate programme framework 1994-1995, it was stressed that UNEP cannot achieve results in isolation and that a particular effort must be made to nurture developing partnerships with other organizations in the United Nations system; both those with complementary specialized knowledge as well as those with delivery capacity. A survey of resources available in other United Nations programmes and agencies has shown, for instance, that UNDP allocated $344 million to environmental projects in 1994-1995; ILO allocated approximately $50 million to its environment-related operational activities in 1994; and estimated FAO expenditures related to environmental projects in 1992-1993 were $51.3 million.

11. UNEP is not a funding agency, but uses its resources to start up projects that will draw funding from other sources. In the 1992 management study of UNEP 5/ (see para. 71 below) it was reported that many of those interviewed in a large number of agencies and bodies of the United Nations system indicated the importance they and their organizations attached to UNEP's catalytic role. It was noted that, particularly in the early years following the Stockholm Conference, UNEP's support and stimulus, financial as well as intellectual, had been an important factor. It was also noted that UNEP's financial contribution to the work of many of the agencies had declined in absolute as well as relative terms. However, there are also projects where UNEP has been the major contributor for a long time without any agency picking up the responsibility, and where the catalysis has not taken place. By its resolution 42/186 of 11 December 1987, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation contained in the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, annexed to that resolution, that specialized agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system should more speedily assume full operational and financial responsibility for environmental programmes supported by UNEP in their sectors. This issue drew two main comments from agency staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit: (a) considering the specific mandates and constitutions of specialized agencies, full operational and financial responsibility is not always an attainable goal; and (b) if the agencies assume greater financial responsibility, resources made available should be redirected to the priorities of Agenda 21 that are not already well covered by the United Nations system, such as environmental impact assessment.

12. At consultations held in 1994 at Bellagio, Italy, and Coppet, Switzerland, on the theme "Refocusing UNEP", it was concluded that UNEP should reorient its current programme, emphasize strategic and intellectual leadership rather than operational activities and develop the substantive and managerial capacity to catalyse external resources effectively. It was noted that such a transformation would require a sharper focus that was evident in UNEP's existing

programmes and activities, but it could be achieved without immediate changes in UNEP's underlying mandate or legal underpinnings. Notwithstanding the global mandate of a number of United Nations specialized agencies, UNEP was seen by a number of agency staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit as being the only programme of the United Nations mandated to address environmental issues globally. However, they were divided on the future role for UNEP; the majority were in favour of a continued and enhanced role for UNEP and argued that environmental action demands that complex issues cutting across sectors be monitored from a global environment perspective.

13. At the end of the 1970s, the Designated Officials for Environmental Matters, representing the different United Nations agencies concerned and chaired by the UNEP Executive Director, became closely involved in thematic joint programming exercises. Their work provided the basis for the development of the system-wide medium-term environment programme. In the 1992 UNEP annual report 6/ it was observed that the system-wide medium-term environment programme had not become, as had been hoped, the most effective planning and programming tool for the entire system.

14. On the subject of the successor arrangement to the Designated Officials for Environmental Matters and to the system-wide medium-term environment programme, agency staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit generally commented that, regarding policy matters, efficiency may require that the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) should be the only body to prepare decisions for ACC in the areas of development and environment. The General Assembly in its resolution 48/174 of 21 December 1993 stressed the need for close cooperation between UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development. In its decision 17/16 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to report to the Council at its regular session in 1995 on the need for a United Nations system-wide strategy and planning document in the field of the environment.

15. Regarding programme matters, interviewees stated that collaboration at programme level, when it happened, had been effective, as had been the case in the 1970s with the joint units established at the regional commissions and with the Earthwatch inter-agency working group (see also paras. 18 and 26 below on the Earthwatch secretariat and the UNEP/Department of Humanitarian Affairs joint unit). UNEP's change of leadership at the beginning of 1993 and the Governing Council decision to modify the allocations to the various subprogrammes in May 1993 resulted in less consultation and collaboration with other agencies during the 1993-1994 period.

16. Another coordinating body, the Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE), was established in 1980 to integrate appropriate environmental measures into development cooperation activities. UNEP has assumed CIDIE secretariat functions. In 1994, at the fifteenth meeting of CIDIE, a mutual understanding about the future need for CIDIE was not reached. It should be noted that, following a 1993 initiative of the World Bank, a growing number of financial institutions are meeting to discuss very practical affairs of common concern, such as procedures for assuring the environmental quality of projects and economic analysis of environmental projects. The meetings have been focused and successful.

17. In its decision 17/11 of 21 May 1993, the UNEP Governing Council emphasized that ACC could play a significant role in assisting the Council to address system-wide cooperation and coordination for the environment, taking into account the development perspective. In 1993, the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development launched a process of intensive review of the activities of the organizations of the system with a view to enhancing inter-agency coordination and developing an effective response to Agenda 21. At the September 1994 meeting of the Organizational Committee of ACC, concerning future reports of ACC to the UNEP Governing Council, the view was expressed that final clearance of those reports at the level of the Organizational Committee of ACC would be facilitated by routing them through the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development. 7/ Consultations are under way between the Executive Director of UNEP and executive heads of organizations concerning coordination arrangements in the field of the environment.

Recommendation 1, Catalytic role of UNEP in emerging environmental issues: UNDP should, in its catalytic role in emerging environmental issues, draw to a greater extent on the contributions of the United Nations system and of the international scientific and other professional communities, to ensure that problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by Governments, through the Governing Council and other bodies.

Recommendation 2, UNEP coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system:

(a) UNEP should coordinate, under the guidance of the Governing Council, environmental programmes within the United Nations system in partnership with the relevant units in agencies and programmes in a manner conducive to other institutions assuming greater operational and financial responsibility;

(b) Coordination at the programmatic level within UNEP should be the responsibility of individual programme managers for each area of Agenda 21; they should maintain a continuous dialogue with their counterparts in the United Nations system, keeping the state of the environment and the effectiveness of United Nations environmental programmes under review; mechanisms for influencing other organizations at the programme level, such as the Earthwatch secretariat and the UNEP/Department of Humanitarian Affairs joint unit on environmental emergencies, should be utilized more systematically;

(c) Coordination of environmental programmes at the policy level should be carried out under the arrangements made to follow up UNCED; the necessary additional consultations with organizations within or outside the United Nations system should be carried out on an ad hoc basis.

Recommendation 3, Programmed UNEP activities: The Executive Director should, within her authority to adjust the apportionments for each budget line by 20 per cent, redeploy resources for the Environment Fund programme during each biennium to address emerging issues for which no other institution has established mandates, recognized expertise or delivery

capacity. The resources for the reallocations should be redeployed from those activities where other institutions have developed expertise and capacity to deliver or additional funding from other sources besides the Environment Fund have been secured. The reallocations should be done in consultation with the institutions concerned.

III. PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

A. Environmental assessment

1. Earthwatch

18. Earthwatch is a coordinating mechanism through which United Nations bodies, in collaboration with Governments and scientists, gather data as the basis for comprehensive assessments of environment issues. The assessments are to provide early warning of environmental threats and serve decision makers and planners as a foundation for devising effective responses and policies. In 1992, as a result of consultations with all United Nations agencies and organizations concerned, a UNEP Earthwatch secretariat was established at Geneva as a service provided to the United Nations system. In preparation for the review of Earthwatch requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/192 of 21 December 1993, the Earthwatch working party, with representatives of the United Nations system, was convened for the first time by UNEP in 1994. UNEP's role remains catalytic and coordinating, except where operational activities are supported through UNEP's environmental assessment programmes (see paras. 19 to 27 below): the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), the International Referral System for Sources of Environmental Information (INFOTERRA) and the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC), and the assessment activities of programmes such as those on oceans and coastal areas, desertification control and industry and the environment and the biodiversity unit.

2. Environmental assessment programmes until 1994

(a) Global Environmental Monitoring System

19. The GEMS Programme Activity Centre (GEMS/PAC) mandate is to support the collective effort of the United Nations system to monitor and assess the global environment. Its projects are mostly implemented in collaboration with other United Nations organizations, such as FAO, WHO and WMO, and operated under these organizations by national and international institutions. Since the early 1970s, a considerable number of networks have been established for monitoring environmental pollution at regional and global levels, such as GEMS/Water. A planning committee of the Global Terrestrial Operation System (GTOS) was established in 1993.

20. In some cases the Governing Council has decided on issues for assessment; in other cases, decisions about assessment priorities have been taken at the GEMS Director level. There is insufficient coordination within UNEP between

GEMS and other units. The procedure followed to carry out assessments needs to be more effective.

(b) Global Resource Information Database

21. GRID was formed in 1985 to handle, using modern technology, the data sets which were emerging through various monitoring activities under GEMS, as well as to support and facilitate interactive use by analysts and decision makers. Over the last few years, the terms of reference of GRID have been expanded to involve all kinds of environmental data sets. The activities of GRID are at present carried out at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, together with nine regional centres, which are funded by the host countries. The complexity of gathering all available environmental data from around the world has led GRID to become more preoccupied with data management than supporting analysis and assessment of environmental issues or situations.

(c) International Referral System for Sources of Environmental Information

22. The global environmental information network is a system of government-supported focal points, regional service centres and centres of excellence which serve as special sectoral sources and provide responses to user queries. In 1992-1994, 60 per cent of the INFOTERRA budget was allocated to training and education activities. INFOTERRA uses resource-sharing and technical cooperation with donor countries whenever possible. Collaboration is being developed between the UNDP sustainable development networking programme and INFOTERRA national information centres.

23. The activities of INFOTERRA and the national focal points have not always resulted in better public access to information, but there are indications that pilot projects to improve coordination and to give network access to new partners are being successfully implemented. The original task of INFOTERRA to act as an information broker will gradually diminish as the computer technologies continue to improve and become widespread so that professionals can network directly; INFOTERRA's role in building capacity for national environmental information handling and for maintaining access to a global network will increase in importance. Relations between INFOTERRA and other information systems need to be defined, in particular, to avoid duplication between INFOTERRA's special sectoral sources and the networking activities which are ongoing within UNEP in many of the units gathering information on special environmental issues. In 1994, INFOTERRA was transferred to the new UNEP information centre (see para. 62 below).

(d) International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals

24. IRPTC was created by UNEP in 1975 to work on ensuring the most appropriate and least damaging use of chemicals and to provide a global early-warning system concerning undesirable environmental side effects. IRPTC organizes training to assist developing countries in setting up national registers of potentially toxic chemicals. IRPTC also offers training related to data selection and use of its database. Since the London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade were amended in 1989, a considerable amount of IRPTC activities have dealt with national implementation of the Guidelines and

of the prior informed consent procedure. In 1994, IRPTC was transferred to the toxic chemicals and waste management subprogramme.

25. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review of 30 hazardous substance data banks, 8/ stated that the IRPTC data bank had one of the best developed international networks of correspondents dealing with hazardous chemical information in the world. It added that coverage of chemicals (both in number and depth) and ease of access to the data bank were not, however, on a comparable level. In the latest year for which comparable records are available, 1991, the IRPTC data bank contained 82,000 records. Other data banks reviewed by OECD provide great breadth and depth of coverage, for instance CCINFOdisc with over 215,300 entries and the Environmental Chemicals Data and Information Network with over 700,000 entries.

(e) Early warning and emergency assistance

26. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/224 of 22 December 1989 and UNEP Governing Council decision 16/9 of 31 May 1991, a United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance was established by UNEP on an experimental basis in 1992. In 1994, at the end of the experimental phase and after a review by a governmental advisory meeting, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNEP agreed to establish a joint unit on environmental emergencies to provide the environmental services as defined by the advisory meeting. Under these arrangements, UNEP retains substantive responsibility within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs operational framework. The joint unit has already provided useful services by mobilizing international assistance for environmental emergencies in developing countries. An Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies was convened in January 1995, which gave full support to the activities of the joint unit. Progress reports will be submitted to the Governing Council in 1995 and 1997.

(f) Expert groups

27. Several expert groups have contributed to global environmental assessment. For instance, in 1977 a meeting of experts was organized by UNEP/GEMS to discuss ozone layer depletion. The experts adopted a World Plan of Action on the Ozone Layer, which provided for a research programme, eventually leading to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Regarding climate change, several assessments have been conducted by scientists and international agencies and non-governmental organizations, and, in 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by UNEP and WMO. In 1994, the five sponsors of GTOS, FAO, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), UNEP, UNESCO, and WMO, agreed to establish an Ad Hoc Scientific and Technical Planning Group to formulate the overall concept and scope of GTOS and to prepare proposals for its implementation. Experts in the Planning Group are not staff members of the sponsoring organizations. There is a general agreement on the importance of independent scientific assessments. UNEP and funding-agency staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that programmes resulting from these assessments had sometimes been isolated from governmental guidance. Governmental input into the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) with the organization in 1994 of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety was seen as useful to the Programme.

3. Reorganization of the environmental assessment programmes: activities in 1994

28. Agenda 21 stressed that environmental assessment should contribute to (a) enhanced accessibility of relevant, integrated environment and development information, and (b) enhanced national capacities to deal with such information in decision-making and policy-setting. In 1993, the UNEP Governing Council reduced the share of resources in the 1994-1995 budget for specific subprogrammes concerned with global environmental assessment. The Council emphasized the need for assessment not only on global issues but also on issues of more immediate relevance to developing countries, and redirected funds to capacity-building.

29. In 1994, after reorganization, the UNEP environmental assessment subprogramme included GEMS/PAC, GRID, the Earthwatch secretariat and a new Environment and Natural Resource Information Networks (ENRIN) unit established to build the capacity of existing institutions to collect, collate and use data. In 1994, the subprogramme launched a network of assessment-supporting collaborating centres. The network is to promote cooperation between major institutes involved in environmental assessment and reporting and provide a mechanism to incorporate in UNEP assessments the views and inputs from less developed countries. The subprogramme is also organizing a series of regional user consultations, in collaboration with UNEP's regional offices, to discuss the type and degree of assistance countries would need for their environmental assessment and associated data and information management activities and the role of UNEP in fulfilment of these needs. In 1994, five consultations were held.

30. Agenda 21 requested the Statistical Division of the United Nations to pursue the development of indicators for sustainable development at the national level. In 1994, a UNEP/Statistical Division Consultative Expert Group on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators was created to begin addressing this issue. At a workshop hosted by the World Bank in September 1994 the participants recognized that there are many organizations working on developing indicators for sustainable development, and that it would be useful to harmonize these efforts towards a menu of indicators for use in monitoring progress towards sustainable development at the national level. It was also recognized that such a menu should be used in a flexible manner, as the priorities and problems differ between countries and regions. The Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) is working on developing recommendations for highly aggregated macro-level indicators that are policy relevant, scientifically valid and technically achievable. The project, supported in part by UNEP, specifically aims to contribute to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

31. In 1994, the Earthwatch secretariat observed that one of the major problems with environmental assessment is the lack of adequate and specific information about many aspects of our environment and of human pressures on it, and in particular the enormous gap in information on many developing countries and regions, which produces a bias in assessments towards the industrialized countries. The Governments and their statistical services, the international agencies and the scientific community do not have the means, either financial or

human, to fill all these gaps in the foreseeable future. Earthwatch is exploring the potential to use public participation in data collection efforts, while ensuring scientific validity and proper quality control. A few organizations are already successfully using public amateur involvement on a small scale.

32. In his report on information for decision-making and Earthwatch, the Secretary-General stated "for information to be available for decision-making, there are some barriers to the necessary flow of information that must be overcome. There is an increasing problem with access to information for public purposes, often because of the cost of obtaining it. Non-governmental organizations, and even some government departments, are trying to find ways to cover their costs, and see data sales as one option. In some countries, public services are being privatized. Since business users of data can usually pass the costs on to their customers, data charges are often set at what the private sector can afford to pay, thereby pricing public services, including organizations of the United Nations system, out of the market". 9/

Recommendation 4, Credible scientific assessments: In its convenor capacity, UNEP should promote credible scientific assessments through independent expert groups; programmes agreed upon as a result of these assessments should receive governmental guidance and support as in the case of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

Recommendation 5, Coordination of environmental assessment within UNEP: The coordinator of the UNEP environmental assessment subprogramme should also coordinate activities related to assessment throughout UNEP and make recommendations on joint programming of assessment activities for the consideration of the Executive Director.

Recommendation 6, Discontinuation of superseded UNEP assessment services: Specialized databases and services currently established within UNEP which have been superseded by services offered in other institutions, such as some services within IRPTC, should be discontinued; in such cases, UNEP should redirect queries and provide any other minimal assistance needed.

Recommendation 7, Access to scientific data: UNEP should promote through Earthwatch a global policy of enhanced availability, within the framework of United Nations mandated programmes, of existing environmental data at the national or international levels so as to facilitate the delivery of environmental management tools intended for country decision makers.

Recommendation 8, National capacities for state of the environment information: UNEP should promote through Earthwatch enhancement of national capacities to collect state of the environment information and to use it at the national level for decision-making; such plans should include public participation in data collection efforts and should ensure scientific validity and proper quality control.

Recommendation 9, A common set of indicators: In support of the work of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development Task Manager for Development Watch, UNEP should ensure that Earthwatch assists countries in

developing and adopting a common set of indicators for sustainable development to be used in policy-making and environmental management at the national and international levels; a practical initial set of aggregated indicators that Governments can use in their reporting should be ready for the 1997 overview of Agenda 21 by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

B. Environmental management

33. The second type of broad action included in the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan was environmental management. The programme on environment of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997 states that environmental management is based upon the information accumulated and interpreted by environmental assessment; it is the responsibility of Governments. The United Nations system can help to develop concepts and tools, can stimulate awareness and increase understanding of the approaches available. At the international level, the United Nations system can facilitate the development of international environmental law and the establishment of institutions to administer it. 2/

1. Environmental law and institutions

(a) Achievements and current programme arrangements

34. Since its inception in 1972, UNEP has played a significant role in the development of international environmental law. It has negotiated and obtained the adoption of nearly 30 binding multilateral instruments, as well as 10 sets of non-binding environmental law guidelines and principles. 10/ In 1992, the World Resources Institute observed that "to its credit, UNEP's environmental law programme has had lasting effects not only on the legal instruments themselves, but also on the increasing use of these techniques for developing international environmental law". 11/

35. UNEP's activities in the field of environmental law have been carried out in large part through its Environmental Law and Institutions Programme Activity Centre (ELI/PAC). By its decision 16/25 of 31 May 1991, the Governing Council set the following long-term goals for the work of ELI/PAC: (a) a coherent body of international law in the environmental field; (b) national environmental laws adopted and institutions established in developing countries; and (c) an operational comprehensive database on national and international environmental law. UNEP is currently hosting the secretariats for the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, the Basel Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the conventions on migratory species and biological diversity.

36. In 1982, the Governing Council adopted the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law proposed by senior government officials expert in environmental law. In conformity with the Montevideo Programme, UNEP developed guidelines and agreements in the three priority areas of the programme: land-based sources of marine pollution; the ozone layer; and toxic and dangerous wastes. The review of the Montevideo

Programme for the 1990s took place in 1992; it did not place emphasis on new conventions. By its decision 17/25 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council adopted a new Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law and requested the Executive Director to implement it, within available resources, through preparing and disseminating analytical reports, organizing intergovernmental meetings, and contributing to capacity-building in the field of environmental law.

37. The analysis of policy issues raised by the participants at the seventeenth session of the Governing Council shows that Governments rank programme support for environmental law and the conventions as a first priority. The Council and the secretariat were in agreement on the priority to be given to environmental law and the conventions. However, in its decision on the 1994-1995 budget, the Council reduced the proposed budget for the environmental law and institutions subprogramme by 41.1 per cent, although it should be noted that this budget does not include the trust funds funding the convention secretariats.

(b) Coordination of convention secretariats

38. Under Agenda 21, UNEP is assigned a role in the development of mechanisms to promote and review the effective implementation of international agreements. In addition, Agenda 21 lists the coordinating functions arising from an increasing number of international legal agreements as a priority area on which UNEP should concentrate, including the functioning of the secretariats of the conventions, taking into account the need for the most efficient use of resources, including possible co-location of secretariats established in the future. 12/

(i) Convention secretariats administered by UNEP

39. In 1994, the first meeting on coordination of secretariats of environmental conventions concluded that the new coordinating mandate given to UNEP under Agenda 21 was aimed at (a) filling lacunae which may exist in the functions performed by the secretariats; (b) supporting secretariats in terms of programmatic, legal, financial and conference-servicing functions; and (c) promoting synergies of effort and cost efficiency of the secretariats.

40. Administrative support to the secretariats and support for fund-raising need to be strengthened. In general, contributions to the convention secretariat trust funds are received late in the year they are due. Secretariat officials of several conventions have stated that funding for their required activities has not been stable, and funds have had to be obtained from alternative sources. Regarding the capacity of the secretariats to administer, concerns have been expressed about control over implementing agencies and about a lack of suggestions regarding outstanding political issues, including the failure to achieve mandates and the slow pace of project implementation. There are cases where the formulation of projects by secretariats or by implementing agencies required additional review before submission to donors or to other organizations.

(ii) Other conventions

41. In 1994, at its third session, the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development recognized that compliance with, monitoring of and reporting on various international legal instruments could not be harmonized through the United Nations system, since each convention was steered by an intergovernmental body independent from other conventions. However, those bodies could be assisted in developing model texts or concepts for further consideration and adaptation. It would also be helpful to understand the manner in which the various conventions related to sustainable development converged. 13/ In 1994, at it second session, the Commission on Sustainable Development requested UNEP to study further the concept, requirements and implications of sustainable development and international law. 14/

42. Staff in several organizations interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit, stated that UNEP can play a useful role in convening meetings where relevant organizations would gain knowledge of others' activities. Such a meeting was convened by the World Bank in November 1992, following UNCED and the adoption by the Governing Council of the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the 1990s. Interviewees stated that meetings can facilitate common planning and contribute to avoiding duplication. For instance, a number of information and training activities are organized by convention secretariats and several of the conventions are implemented by the same national authorities, either customs, trade or environment ministries.

(c) Collaboration with other organizations

43. Organizations such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN) have made a significant contribution to the development of international environmental law and national environmental legislation. The IUCN environmental law programme collaborates with partners all over the world in developing national and international law; provides services directed towards building expertise in developing countries; and maintains the Environmental Law Information System, which is one of the most comprehensive collections of material on environmental law in the world, with over 115,000 citations. This Information System could be further developed to satisfy the needs of an increasing diversity of users.

2. Environmental economics

44. The control measures UNEP selects consist primarily of targets. Economic incentives which might boost compliance are not regular components of UNEP's approach. 15/ UNEP does not usually evaluate ex ante the economic implications of the legal regimes it proposes. In a 1993 report to the Governing Council the Executive Director stated that UNEP must put greater emphasis on environmental economics and that the traditional command-and-control regulatory approaches to environmental protection were approaching the limits of their utility. 16/ In 1994, in order to understand better how economic instruments might be applied to environmental policy in developing countries, UNEP and OECD launched a joint project on the application of economic policy instruments for environmental management. The UNEP Environmental Economics Unit is also addressing the issue of environmental impact assessment capability in developing countries.

3. Global Environment Facility

45. The independent evaluation of the pilot phase of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), completed at the end of 1993, observed that the global policy framework for GEF was in general consistent with the intentions of the biodiversity, the climate and the London Dumping conventions and the Montreal Protocol but that, with a few exceptions, UNEP had largely failed to ensure consistency with other global and regional legal agreements and intergovernmental programmes relevant to the GEF focal areas. 17/ In 1994, at the special session of the Governing Council on the restructured GEF, it was stated that UNEP's role in the restructured GEF had to be enhanced. The question also arose of whether UNEP was duly equipped to fulfil the tasks set out in the instrument for the establishment of the restructured GEF, especially in terms of staffing. 18/ The credibility of UNEP as a full partner in the GEF is likely to depend on its ability to provide high quality, visible and identifiable contributions to the GEF operational strategies. At the GEF Council meeting held in November 1994, it was announced that UNEP would strengthen its capacities in GEF delivery by establishing a formal GEF support structure, including a core unit headed by a full-time officer, and by drawing more systematically upon the agency's existing focal area expertise. The GEF Coordination Office has been set up and is developing UNEP's strategy and programme of work. The Scientific Advisory Panel to the GEF has also been established by UNEP.

Recommendation 10. Facilitating the coordination of international environmental agreements: UNEP should facilitate, within its mandate, the coordinating functions arising from the increasing number of international legal agreements on the environment with the relevant international organizations in the following areas: (a) development of international law; (b) enforcement of treaties; and (c) formulation and implementation of national legislation. It should do so by convening meetings, providing support services and exchanging information between the organizations and intergovernmental bodies involved. The goal of such UNEP activity should be to facilitate common planning and avoid duplication, taking into account the work and recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Recommendation 11. A comprehensive database on national and international environmental law: The mandated development of a comprehensive database on national and international environmental law, and of related user services, should be implemented without duplicating services already well developed in other organizations. The partnership between UNEP and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre should be strengthened, the IUCN database should be used as the core archival system for environmental law and UNEP should provide IUCN with the necessary support to enable adequate maintenance and further development, in particular to satisfy UNEP requirements. UNEP should concentrate its resources on developing services to users and partners.

Recommendation 12. Support services to convention secretariats: UNEP should provide adequate support services to those convention secretariats it administers. UNEP could assist in obtaining additional funding for secretariats to implement national projects where their expertise is

required. In carrying out its responsibility as administrator of convention secretariats, UNEP should ensure that, for example, work programmes are implemented and that this is done in an economical manner in conformity with decisions of the parties. To carry out these tasks, UNEP should establish a support unit with the required administrative and substantive capacity; this unit should also liaise with other secretariats of international environmental agreements to advance the implementation of Agenda 21 mandates regarding environmental law and to avoid duplication of support services.

Recommendation 13, Resources for environmental law and institutions: The share of resources allocated to the environmental law and institutions subprogramme should be restored to the 1992-1993 level. A task force representing different sectors of UNEP should be established to design a programme that coordinates and utilizes all work and related resources on environmental law and institutions within UNEP.

C. Supporting measures

1. Capacity-building

46. Agenda 21 stresses the crucial role of UNDP in the follow-up to UNCED, which should include acting as the lead agency in organizing the efforts of the United Nations system towards capacity-building at the local, national and regional levels. 19/ On the same issue, Agenda 21 recommends that UNEP should provide technical, legal and institutional advice to Governments, upon request, in establishing and enhancing their national legal and institutional frameworks, in particular, in cooperation with UNDP capacity-building efforts, and should support Governments, upon request, and development agencies and organs in the integration of environmental aspects into their development policies and programmes, in particular through provision of environmental, technical and policy advice during programme formulation and implementation. 20/ At its second session, the Committee on Sustainable Development noted a number of areas, such as trade, technology partnership arrangements and hazardous waste management, where UNEP involvement in capacity-building and technical assistance is desirable.

(a) Assessments of activities until 1994

47. Throughout the years, most UNEP programmes have coordinated activities with UNDP. It should be noted that requests for assistance from Governments frequently reach UNEP directly; UNEP provides the necessary guidance and, in a number of cases, UNDP funds have covered the cost of services offered. However, staff interviewed in several organizations by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that UNEP had not developed a strategic approach to capacity-building and that funds had been distributed on an ad hoc basis. It was observed in the UNEP evaluation report for 1990 that experience had shown that a piecemeal approach, while useful in tackling very specific environmental problems, did not work when assisting a Government in tackling environment and development problems on a national scale. 21/

48. In 1991, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) observed that the cooperation between UNDP, UNEP and the specialized agencies was rather administrative and procedural. JIU commented that the possibility of a deeper collaboration between them at the time of UNDP's country programming raised the problem of UNEP's scant resources, and noted that to cope with the problem, UNEP had drawn up guidelines for the use of UNDP resident representatives. 22/ The UNEP corporate programme framework 1994-1995 stated that UNEP's power to convene and its access to governmental authorities, United Nations partners and technical expertise in specific environmental sectors could be harnessed more effectively to ensure that all aspects of capacity-building are considered. UNEP's regional offices would be instrumental in orchestrating support to developing countries and those with economies in transition.

(b) Collaboration between UNEP and UNDP

49. In 1994, the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNEP restated the role of UNDP resident representatives as representatives of UNEP, a role which will be central to the strengthening of UNDP/UNEP collaboration. They suggested three areas of focus to this collaboration at the national level: linking issues of environment and development; enhancing the implementation at the national level of the Rio and post-Rio conventions; and deploying UNEP's expertise and information resources in close cooperation with UNDP's sustainable development networking programme.

50. In 1994, the environmental law and institutions in Africa project was launched after consultations between UNDP, the World Bank, FAO, IUCN, UNEP and the main donor. The project takes into account UNEP expertise for environmental law and UNDP country coordinating capacity; all national level programmes will be implemented under the supervision of the UNDP resident representative, with UNEP acting as technical adviser. UNEP will have to respond to country demand-led capacity-building. In several organizations, staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that the approach followed by the project could be applied to other regions, if funds can be found. At the request of donors, UNEP's Clearing House for Technical Cooperation has prepared proposals for a capacity-building programme that could be applied in other regions.

51. Staff in several organizations interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit on UNEP initiatives for capacity-building observed that through assessment of needs at the national level clear roles were emerging for UNEP, with different emphases in each country. UNEP has to follow up with concrete proposals; in general, UNDP resident representatives lack information on the resources UNEP could mobilize in a given country, in what programme and for what type of activity. UNEP has not been able to establish regular contacts with World Bank and IUCN country offices, or with UNDP sustainable development officers to promote incorporation of environmental issues in development policies and programmes, or to develop its own knowledge of the national and regional context.

> Recommendation 14, Capacity-building: Regarding capacity-building, UNEP should focus on (a) providing information services to other organizations and to Governments for use in strategic planning for sustainable

development; and (b) providing technical guidance and policy advice for the development of national environmental law and institutions.

Recommendation 15. Needs assessment for capacity-building: The primary source of assessment of needs should be the UNDP resident representatives, acting in their capacity as UNEP representatives at the country level. Where required, UNEP regional offices should be the link between UNDP resident representatives and UNEP central programmes. UNEP should supply UNDP resident representatives and country representatives of organizations such as the World Bank and United Nations specialized agencies supporting the development and implementation of national plans, with regular information on what UNEP activities could be organized and services provided.

2. Training and environmental education

52. Almost every programme of UNEP is involved in training activities; a small unit, the Environmental Education and Training Unit, organizes and coordinates these training activities. A very high proportion of training activities are conducted with partners such as UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, UNIDO, UNITAR, FAO, WHO and others. The main partner of UNEP in the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) is UNESCO.

(a) International Environmental Education Programme

53. Prior to the Stockholm Conference, UNESCO had been working on environmental education. IEEP itself was launched in 1975 by UNESCO and UNEP. It was observed in the final report of the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, held at Tbilisi in 1977, that through its catalytic role UNEP could become an increasingly important source for environmental data and information for use in the preparation of teaching materials. 23/ OECD noted in a 1993 study on environmental education that considerable work has been done on environmental education but mainly from a pedagogical perspective, for example defining curricula and requirements for teacher training and teaching materials. OECD also noted that, at the international level, IEEP has been most prominent in this approach and that much less work has been undertaken from a perspective of environmental policy. 24/

54. In 1993, in conformity with recommendations contained in Agenda 21, 25/ the fourth Inter-agency Consultation Meeting on Environmental Education, convened by the Director-General of UNESCO, decided to review the existing environmental education, training and information activities of the United Nations system and to prepare a consolidated programme. In 1994, UNESCO launched an interdisciplinary and inter-agency cooperation project on the environment and population education and information for human development; this project is linking several key mechanisms, including the UNESCO/UNEP IEEP.

(b) UNEP specialized training

55. UNEP specialized training is organized to convey the necessary information or enhance the capacity of local institutions to implement programmes. UNEP is

mainly involved in activities preceding and following the delivery of training; frequently, substantive input is also provided by UNEP staff during training. For the period 1990-1994, all training included, over 1,500 people participated in training; training was aimed at a broad target group, including policy makers. During the period, the demand from Governments for integrated environmental management training increased greatly.

56. The UNEP Evaluation Report 1993 observed that it had not been possible to determine the actual impact of training since there was a poor follow-up system in place. There are indications that training is being effective, but no systematic survey of results has been carried out. Regarding the application of new knowledge and skills, in the 1994 UNEP Compendium of Environmental Training Opportunities, out of 18 sections of specialized environmental management training, only one, industry and environment, makes follow-up activities an integral part of its seminar/workshop plans.

57. Organizations such as UNITAR and ILO have developed an important collaboration with UNEP for specialized training programmes. For instance, the recent development of a joint UNEP/UNITAR fellowship programme in environmental law and policy seems to be very promising. However, agency staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit stated that, in regions where UNEP had been successful in building consensus on environmental issues, plans of action, including training, have not been supported by adequate resources and links to other organizations have not been strengthened. As a consequence, very little or no implementation took place at the national level.

> Recommendation 16, UNEP role in environmental training: UNEP should not develop its own training capacity, but should promote collaboration among a core group of international organizations which have the capacity to organize specialized training programmes. UNEP should provide assistance to these organizations and, in particular, staff support in specialized areas at the request of the implementing organization. UNEP should promote necessary follow-up activities six months to a year after the training, or at some other appropriate interval, and draw lessons from this experience.

3. Information

58. The original UNEP mandate addresses several aspects of information, from specialized to public information. In Agenda 21, several priority areas recommended for UNEP action have an information component, in particular (a) dissemination of environmental information and data to Governments and to organs, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system; and (b) raising general awareness and action in the area of environmental protection through collaboration with the general public, non-governmental entities and intergovernmental institutions.

(a) Information and Public Affairs Branch

59. Following the adoption of Governing Council decision 12/15 entitled "Reform of the Information Service" in 1984, the work of UNEP's Information and Public Affairs Branch took on a greater importance. The Branch involved itself in

production of radio programmes and audiovisual material, developed relations with the media and sought to make publications available to readers in developing countries. The Branch undertakes several activities to increase public awareness, which include UNEP involvement in special campaigns, either alone or in partnership. Its publications are the result of collaborative efforts with other organizations. Under the outreach programme, the Branch is supporting activities with national committees and the major groups.

(b) Streamlining the publication programme

60. As early as 1984, in its decision 12/15 the Governing Council had recommended streamlining of the publications programme. Information on the environment from various sources is now abundant (see para. 61 below). In 1994, the UNEP publication list for technical information and public awareness contained over 1,300 titles, of which 307 were written by the Information and Public Affairs Branch, 270 by the oceans and coastal areas programme and 131 by the conferences and Governing Council service. In 1993-1994 the Information and Public Affairs Branch produced over 100 new publications. The publications are distributed through several channels, including the collaborating organizations, but these organizations do not always report on their distribution. The UNEP Evaluation Report 1993 observed that a systematic approach, requiring, inter alia, that distribution is actually done and that publications are appropriate for the target group, is missing in UNEP's use of publications as a strategy for information dissemination and this makes it difficult to determine its catalytic effect in this area.

(c) Reaching the decision makers

61. A number of publications supported by UNEP have the scientific community as a primary audience. They have a good reputation in the scientific community but rarely reach decision makers. In his report on information for decision-making and Earthwatch, the Secretary-General noted that "decision makers may not have the technical training to allow them to use information from scientific, technical or statistical sources in the most productive manner ... This requires a careful reconsideration of the information-supply process ... Indicators are one approach to this problem. Another is the use of 'information brokers', to help interpret, manage, filter and add value to the flood of available information". 26/ Staff in several organizations interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that information on the environment available to the non-specialist is very abundant but of uneven quality, and that quality information is not always tailored to answer specific questions of interest to the decision maker. In 1992-1993, the UNEP/WMO Information Unit on Climate Change produced a number of fact-sheets covering issues of climate change to make authoritative information accessible to decision makers in Government and business; all comments noted by the Central Evaluation Unit were favourable to this initiative.

(d) Quality and nature of public information

62. The UNEP corporate programme framework 1994-1995 stated that reliable flows of objective and meaningful information are critical to the mobilization of an environmentally aware and educated public and to the stimulation of effective

decision-making. Environmental coverage is often problematic for journalists, since they lack the necessary expertise and the resources to offer a well-balanced presentation of the issues. In 1993, UNEP decided to appoint regional information officers to strengthen its presence in the media and help build new regional partnerships. In 1994, a UNEP information centre was established, integrating the Information and Public Affairs Branch, INFOTERRA, the library and the Nairobi United Nations Information Centre; this association can bring about a closer collaboration between the providers of information in substantive units and the scientific writers of the Information and Public Affairs Branch. At the end of 1994, a new editorial direction was proposed for Our Planet, UNEP's bimonthly magazine, with the aim of making it a more targeted publication reflecting the concerns and objectives of UNEP, and providing information and insight not already covered by other publications.

Recommendation 17, Strategy for environment information: Apart from national Governments, the major groups to whose needs for environment information UNEP should be responding are those specified in chapters 23 to 32 of Agenda 21. Decisions to continue existing or produce new information material should be based on (a) a demand-driven process, (b) the assessment that no other organization is better placed to produce and distribute the material, and (c) use of the most cost-effective medium, decided on a case-by-case basis and taking into account the capacity of re-disseminators. This strategy should be implemented in close collaboration with the regional offices. UNEP should monitor systematically through its regional offices and focal points whether or not the information material it produces or sponsors is reaching the intended target group, and how effective it is. Based on the results of this monitoring, the present range and number of information activities should be reduced by terminating the least effective activities.

Recommendation 18, Information broker to policy makers: UNEP should design its information services to governmental and business and industry decision makers primarily in the capacity of information broker; these services should facilitate access to existing quality information and format the information to respond to specific questions; these services should not be delivered primarily through hard-copy publications.

Recommendation 19, Public information material: UNEP should provide public information material designed to be of direct use to journalists and media representatives following the same time-delivery standards and methods of drafting and presentation as news agencies.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

A. Regional activities

1. Strengthening of regional representation

63. Agenda 21 recommended that the regional offices of UNEP should be strengthened without weakening its headquarters at Nairobi and that UNEP should take steps to reinforce and intensify its liaison and interaction with UNDP and

the World Bank. 27/ In 1994, measures were taken to enhance the role of UNEP regional directors in programme implementation, with due regard to the responsibility of the programme managers. In 1994-1995, the 6 regional offices had a total staff of 36 professionals, including outposted staff of global programmes. The regional offices thus account for approximately 8 per cent of UNEP total professional staff. The staffing level varies from office to office; sometimes the allocation is below what would appear potentially useful. For instance, the regional office for North America is well located to interact with the World Bank, UNDP and the Commission on Sustainable Development and to exploit more systematically the potentialities in the region for support to the developing countries, but has a staff of only three professionals.

64. The collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions is dependent on the regional context. In Europe, UNEP had catalysed in the 1970s some components of the environmental programme at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which is now well developed. At present, Governments in the region would like UNEP to develop further interregional exchange of information and assistance to countries in transition. In Africa, Governments have made institution-building one of the priorities; in 1994, UNEP/the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) set up a joint task force to develop a strategy for enhancing inter-agency cooperation, including detailed working arrangements. At the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) there is an ECLAC/UNEP joint unit and one has recently been established at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). At the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) a small unit is coordinating environment-related activities.

2. Global programmes and headquarters

65. The independent evaluation of the pilot phase of GEF observed that the location of UNEP in Nairobi was a serious handicap for UNEP to operate more efficiently. The substandard communication facilities from and to Nairobi, and the demand for frequent travel to meetings which mostly took place at the headquarters of the World Bank or UNDP, considerably undercut the efficiency of UNEP's work. 17/ In all organizations, staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented on the difficulty to interact effectively with UNEP programme managers, the distance being a factor. In its decision 17/38 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council recognized the specific need for improved communication facilities at the headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi in order to enable Governments and their representatives in various meetings to communicate efficiently with their respective missions and capitals. Communication facilities at headquarters have been and will be further improved.

66. Programmes with limited staff resources and a programme of work requiring frequent consultations with a large number of programmes outside of UNEP would benefit from being outposted to the location of the regional office where the most interactions occur. For instance, the environment and economics programme requires constant interaction with counterparts in scientific sectors and with organizations such as GATT/WTO, UNCTAD and OECD. The freshwater resources programme has to maintain extensive contacts with the World Bank, and the

preparation of the global water assessment involves consultations at the global level with a large number of partners, such as WHO, WMO, FAO and UNESCO. Recently, the participating agencies requested that consultations be intensified.

67. Global programmes such as the industry and the environment programme and IRPTC have been outposted to Paris and Geneva respectively and a branch of the oceans and coastal areas programme is located at Bangkok. Sometimes a large part of the data, experience and supporting institutions of interest for a global programme are available in a region. In addition, a regional action plan or a large number of projects can make one region the focus of global activities. In such cases, units implementing global programmes would benefit from being co-located with the regional office, in part or entirely. The criteria proposed above to be used in determining whether or not to recommend co-location do not imply a permanent arrangement.

> Recommendation 20, Outposting of programmes to regional offices: Headquarters units, such as the Environment and Economics and Freshwater Units, with limited staff resources and a programme of work requiring mostly frequent interactions with programmes outside of UNEP, should be outposted to the location of the regional office where the most interactions occur. Programmes such as the biodiversity and dryland ecosystems and desertification control programmes, for which a large part of the data, experience and supporting institutions are available in a region, should be co-located with the UNEP office in the region.

B. Support to the major groups

68. Agenda 21 recommends that UNEP should concentrate on raising general awareness and action in the area of environmental protection through collaboration with the general public, non-governmental entities and intergovernmental institutions. 20/ Since 1972, UNEP has helped to encourage and coordinate environmental efforts by business and industry, parliamentarians, women's and youth organizations and religious groups. Relations already established with parliamentarians and business and industry, through organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Organisation of Employers, need to be strengthened.

Non-governmental organizations

69. UNEP has established working relations with a number of non-governmental organizations; it has provided support to the Environment Liaison Centre International, a global coalition of non-governmental organizations whose aim is to strengthen such organizations working in environment and development, particularly in the developing countries. In 1991, the Governing Council, by its decision 16/7 of 31 May 1991, requested the Executive Director to provide information services and technical advice to assist non-governmental organizations and community organizations to participate in environmental activities in their own countries, and to consult and explore further modalities of cooperation with national and international non-governmental organizations. To further involve non-governmental organizations in the work of the

organization, one major handicap, from UNEP's point of view, is the financial constraints facing many programme units. Financial support from the Environment Fund for cooperative projects with non-governmental organizations has declined in both absolute and relative terms in the last 15 years (see para. 75 below). To make up for his handicap, a number of units have provided technical assistance and endorsed non-governmental organization projects for alternative funding sources.

70. Currently, several units have a responsibility for different aspects of collaboration with non-governmental organizations, for example the Information and Public Affairs Branch for public information, Conference Services in relation to the work of the Governing Council and several environmental assessment and environmental management programmes for project implementation. There is no mechanism to provide a framework for the exchange of information and ideas, to represent the interests of independent sectors with which UNEP wishes to be associated, or to collaborate with UNEP in project planning, design and implementation.

> Recommendation 21. Support to major groups: UNEP should establish a strategy of collaboration with non-governmental organizations and other organizations representing the major groups aimed at broader involvement of these groups in UNEP's activities and a gradual increase of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations. A coordinator should be designated to follow up the implementation of this strategy in all UNEP programmes.

C. Programme management

71. Following Governing Council decision 16/6 of 31 May 1991, an independent external evaluation of the organization and management of UNEP was carried out in 1992. In 1993, the Committee of Permanent Representatives prepared a report containing proposals for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of UNEP in fulfilling its mandate. The main management issues addressed by the report were in relation to broadening the base of contributions to the Environment Fund, making the flow of contributions to the Fund more predictable and proposing programmes based on a realistic assessment of likely contributions to the Fund. The report stressed that greater transparency of the budget required that a clear distinction be maintained between programme delivery and administrative overheads. The report observed that the management style applicable in the UNEP secretariat will mainly be set by the Executive Director and that her intentions have been favourably noted, in particular the emphasis on teamwork, delegation of tasks and responsibilities, decentralization and establishment of clear lines of command and communication. 4/ In its decisions 17/41 and 17/43 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council took note of the report, decided that the format of the budgets should be revised to achieve greater transparency and comprehensibility, and further decided that the role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives should be developed to assess regularly the implementation of Council decisions, especially the execution of programme activities and their budgetary implications.

72. Since 1993, UNEP has been going through a process of change. This process is aimed at refocusing UNEP activities and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programme management. At the end of 1994, Central Evaluation Unit interviews and the documentation reviewed highlighted a number of issues briefly analysed in the following paragraphs.

1. Fund-raising

73. Financial support from the Environment Fund to ongoing programmes, such as the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) and the World Climate Programme, and to activities which require sustained long-term support has decreased in the last few years. The endorsement by UNEP of projects under the responsibility of other organizations has contributed to securing funds for these projects. Several UNEP units and regional offices have been successful in raising additional funds from donor countries and private foundations for their own activities or projects executed by third parties. The Clearing House for Technical Cooperation has used a number of approaches to raise funds, such as the coordination of several sources of funding for umbrella projects. The Clearing House has also assisted Governments in formulating environmental strategies and then handed over responsibility to other agencies or donors. In 1994, after consultations between programme managers and the Clearing House, it was suggested that the Clearing House should facilitate the provision of backup services for fund-raising, attempt to generate innovative ideas for fund-raising and advise programme managers and regional offices accordingly. Resource mobilization for environmental actions is one of the core functions in the UNEP corporate programme framework 1994-1995. However, an overall fund-raising strategy and a mechanism actively to coordinate its implementation has not yet been established.

2. Budget performance

74. In the 1992 management study of UNEP it was observed that the cash balances maintained in the Environment Fund were high, which had given the impression to donors that there was no necessity to increase funding in the future. Monthly cash balances of the Environment Fund were $46 million in December 1992, $53 million in December 1993 and $39 million in June 1994. Table 1 below shows, for recent years, the proportion of resources not expended every year. Moreover, projects have been approved late in the year; in 1992, 50 per cent of the projects and in 1993, 60 per cent of the projects were approved during the last quarter. UNEP explained that this was the result of contributions to the Environment Fund being voluntary, which forces UNEP to commit resources only when cash payments or firm pledges are made. As a consequence, at times projects cannot be approved early enough to ensure implementation during a given biennium. UNEP also noted that in 1993 and early 1994 project approval had slowed down as a result of the transitional period since UNCED and the overall review of the project preparation and approval system. This also meant that consultations with UNEP partners were postponed. At the end of 1994, the situation appeared to be improving.

Table 1. UNEP sources of funds and budget performance

	Sources of funds		Percentage of resources not expended	
	Environment Fund	All	Environment Fund programme (PPSC and RA not included)	All
1989	38 582 969	57 085 552	..	..
1990	51 644 836	78 105 878	46	37
1991	59 378 068	89 450 762	14	13
1992	63 744 425	102 370 099	40	23
1993	66 868 100	112 106 667	8	18

Note: PPSC = Programme and Programme Support Cost
RA = Reserve Account

3. Role of implementing partners

75. In the UNEP annual report for 1992, the Executive Director noted that there has been an increasing trend towards internal projects. This is a deviation from UNEP's original function, which was not to concentrate on the programme of the UNEP secretariat but rather to serve as a catalyst and coordinator of the environment programme of the United Nations system. 6/ UNEP explained that since the unrestricted resources available to UNEP for environmental activities have decreased and the costs of operations and the demand for UNEP's services have increased, expanding the number of internal projects, the resources available to finance external activities has been significantly reduced. A survey by the Central Evaluation Unit of UNEP projects for 1984-1985 and for 1992-1993 confirms this trend towards internal projects (see table 2 below). As a consequence, the catalytic effect of the Environment Fund is reduced. Relevant commends made by staff of United Nations agencies have been mentioned in paragraph 11 above. On the question of a larger involvement of non-governmental organizations, staff in other organizations interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that giving a larger share of Environment Fund projects to non-governmental organizations would catalyse more additional resources than the present arrangement does.

Table 2. Implementation of UNEP projects

	1984-1985 (131 projects)		1992-1993 (237 projects)	
	Proportion of projects	Share of UNEP funds (all funds)	Proportion of projects	Share of UNEP funds (all funds)
Projects implemented by:	(Percentage)			
Cooperating agencies (agencies/programmes of the United Nations system	27	16.5	23	6.9
Government agencies	16	11	5	1.3
Non-governmental organizations	33	11	33	7.6
UNEP (internal)	24	61.5	39	84.2
	100	100.0	100	100.0

4. Management efficiency

76. The last comprehensive reporting of the internal auditors on programme activities, covering the period 1990-1991, observed that the monitoring of the programme performance and management of the resources could be significantly improved. Subsequent audits also refer to these problems. Regarding pilot or demonstration projects, the UNEP Evaluation Report 1993 noted that, while some projects were quite efficient in the use of the funds allocated in the project document, others achieved the expected outputs only after substantial financial resources had been added. The Central Evaluation Unit noted that, during project implementation, there is a lack of information on the total amount of resources expended by implementing agencies. Several reports have observed that improved electronic services are needed and in 1993 the Executive Director agreed that a better information system would help support efficient management. 28/

77. Other factors hinder the most economical use of resources. One of them is the administration of the trust funds, of which there were 40 in 1993. In its decision 17/39 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to submit proposals for the rationalization and coordination of these funds to the Council at its eighteenth session. Another factor is the multiplication of reporting requirements as a result of the institutional arrangements to follow up the implementation of UNCED recommendations and of the development of the role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

78. Since 1993, UNEP has been undergoing a process of reorganization. The Management Board and the Corporate Planning and Accountability Service were established in 1993 and 1994 respectively to increase organizational efficiency

and effectiveness. The project approval procedures have been modified, project monitoring has been strengthened and training for personnel involved in project identification and design is scheduled. The strengthening of regional offices also has as one of its objectives to ensure a better design and monitoring of projects. A plan for the harmonization and further development of electronic services has been prepared. The effect of the recent reorganization on the efficiency and effectiveness of UNEP will need to be assessed at a later time.

5. Human resources

79. In its decision 16/45 of 31 May 1991, the Governing Council noted a 24 per cent vacancy rate in 1990, greatly differing from the planned estimate of 10 per cent. As at September 1994, the vacancy rate for professional posts was 18 per cent. It should be noted that this vacancy rate was considerably higher in the programme activity centres, at 28 per cent. To ensure that adequate staff resources are available, the secondment of personnel from other organizations and Governments is a common practice. Another approach has been to rely on the hiring of a number of consultants. UNEP staff interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit stated that these practices can have positive aspects, as long as they are not used as stop-gap measures.

80. The 1992 management study of UNEP reported that 16 per cent of professional staff left UNEP in 1990. The Central Evaluation Unit could not ascertain what the turnover rate was in 1994 because some of the basic information was not available. The management study commented that the impact of the turnover rate was magnified by the fact that UNEP undertook very limited human resource planning. The Central Evaluation Unit noted cases of discrepancies between post requirements and qualifications of appointed persons. Regarding training, in its decision 17/33 of 21 May 1993 the Governing Council encouraged the Executive Director to tailor the training programmes to the specific needs of the staff with a view to achieving enhanced efficiency and productivity. In 1994, one of the central concepts to emerge from the Bellagio/Coppet consultations was that the professional quality of UNEP staff must be enhanced to achieve the credibility necessary to exercise a leadership role.

> Recommendation 22, Fund-raising: UNEP should formulate an overall fund-raising strategy for environmental activities and establish a mechanism to implement it. The mechanism should include the provision of advice to all UNEP units as well as other organizations inside and outside the United Nations system on funding opportunities to complement and multiply the impact of the Environment Fund. UNEP should continue to facilitate the procurement of funding by endorsing those projects closely related to its programme of activities.
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> Recommendation 23, Office of Internal Oversight Services study of the effects of the reorganization of UNEP: Considering the substantial reorganization of UNEP which took place in 1993 and 1994, an independent study should be carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services by the end of 1996 to review the effects of this reorganization and assess the management situation in UNEP.

Notes

1/ A/49/16 (Part I), para. 34.

2/ See A/47/6/Rev.1, para. 16.11.

3/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (vol. I, vol. I/Corr.1, vol. II, vol. III and vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 38.21 and 38.22.

4/ See UNEP/GC.17/32, annex IV.

5/ Coopers and Lybrand, Management and Organization Study, London, January 1992.

6/ See 1992 Annual Report of the Executive Director, UNEP, Nairobi, 1993.

7/ See ACC/1994/2/Add.2, para. 9.

8/ Users Guide to Hazardous Substance Data Banks Available in OECD Member Countries (OECD/GD(91)102), OECD, 1991.

9/ E/CN.17/1995/18, para. 92.

10/ Among these instruments are the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a number of regional conventions for the protection and development of the marine environment.

11/ Lee Kimball, Forging International Agreement: Strengthening Intergovernmental Institutions for Environment and Development (World Resources Institute, 1992), p. 24.

12/ Report of UNCED ..., paras. 38.22 and 39.8.

13/ See ACC/1994/7, para. 94.

14/ See E/1994/33, para. 6.

15/ Carol A. Petsonk, "The role of UNEP in the development of international environmental law", The American University Journal of International Law and Policy (Winter 1990), pp. 351-391.

16/ See UNEP/GC.17/28, para. 41.

17/ Global Environment Facility: Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank, 1994, p. 125.

18/ A/49/223, para. 18.

19/ Report of UNCED ..., paras. 38.24 and 38.25.

20/ Ibid., para. 38.22.

21/ See Evaluation Report 1990, UNEP, Nairobi, para. 9.

22/ "Assessment of the environmental focus of projects financed by UNDP and other United Nations agencies" (JIU/REP/91/2), paras. 41 and 42 (A/47/475).

23/ See Final report of the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, Tbilisi, 1977 (ED/MD/49), UNESCO, para. 17.

24/ See Environmental Education: An Approach to Sustainable Development, OECD, Paris, 1993, p. 26.

25/ Report of UNCED ..., para. 36.5.

26/ See E/CN.17/1995/18, para. 18.

27/ Report of UNCED ..., para. 38.23.

28/ See UNEP/GC.17/28, para. 20.